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Nineteenth Century Prophets

IX.—ABRAHAM LINCOLN

A SUNDAY LECTURE

BEFORE

Congregation Rodeph Shalom

Eighth Street, near Penn Avenue

PITTSBURG, PA.

BY

RABBI J. LEONARD LEVY, D. D.

SERIES 4

SUNDAY, APRIL 16, 1905

No. 26

These Sunday Lectures are distributed FREE OF CHARGE in the Temple to all who attend the Services.

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SUNDAY LECTURES

BEFORE

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Abraham Lincoln

The prophets of the human family have been men of mighty purpose, who gained a glimpse of truth and who remained true to the vision granted to them. They have been men full of vigor, of set ideas and of fixed determination. They understood that God reveals Himself to man not only through the physical phenomena of nature, but also through the law of righteousness. They conceived it to be their duty to do their utmost to apply this law to the economic, social, political and religious conditions of the age in which they lived, to follow that law and to induce others so to do.

The Hope of the Reformer.

They dived deep into the sea of moral thought, brought therefrom a gem, and they were determined that men should wear it. They also ascended to the heights of the mountain of experience, they saw God face to face, spoke with Him "as a man speaketh to his brother," and they came back to earth to tell what they had learned, to the end that mankind might be bettered. When these men heard the voice of God impelling them to their duty all shirking became impossible. They had a habit, as has been well said, "of making a bee-line for the gallows." They knew that men would not listen to them. They realized that they would be rejected; but, having once received, as it were,

a command from God, they would not swerve from it; having once put their hand to the plow, they would not turn back; and though they were unaided and unheeded, though they were denounced, though they were defamed, though they were scorned, yet with firm foot, with fixed purpose, they made their proclamation to the world, though the path of glory led but to the grave. These men were alone. Few cared to go to their heights of thought; few understood the full meaning of their visions, and therefore these men were called insane, afflicted with lunacy, though some dignified the supposed disease by calling it "the insanity of genius." The prophets knew that they were sane when the world was crazy. They knew that they were right when all the world was wrong, and they walked their *Via Dolorosa* bearing their heavy burdens, although they were denounced, decried and deserted, although their path led to a cross on which they were to be crucified, or to a stake at which public opinion burned them. They walked whither the light took them, in scorn of consequence and despite the advice of their most friendly acquaintances.

The Trials of the Reformer.

The task of the reformer, like his path, bristles with difficulties. So long as he deals with abstract questions his hearers will say, "How beautifully he speaks!" If he dilates on abstract principles men will flatter him and congratulate him, saying, "Behold a Daniel come to judgment!" If he descants "in beautiful language" on the virtues others are expected to practise, men will hail him as a "brave defender of the faith." But if he dares to reduce these principles to their practical applications and within the intellec-

tual comprehension of the men and women he addresses; if he is bold enough to tell them that these principles are valueless unless practised; if he says that a virtue floating in the air is but wind, and that to be worthy of the name it must be transformed into actual existence in the daily lives of the people, then men will withdraw from him, women will speak ill of him, congregations will fail him, communities will denounce him, and all, forsooth, because he asked them to practise that which they said they admired. Such is the failing of humanity. Alas, poor human nature! We approve the right, but we do not do it. We admire the good, but we are not willing to follow it. Our own selfish ends, our own selfish purposes, are all in which, for the most part, we are interested, and principles can go to the world's end for practical exemplification, for all that human nature generally cares. In the language of Stephen Douglas, most men do not care whether these principles "be voted up or down;" but to the prophets such an attitude is of vast importance. They live to see the religious principle adopted as a daily practice; they struggle to institute moral truths in the daily lives of men.

Few men in a whole century are selected by God to be His messengers. Only a handful in all the history of the human family have thus been designed, and those whom we recognize as humanity's prophets, those whom we cheerfully pedestal in the Temple of Fame for all eternity, are but few; yet they are the salt of humanity, its uplifters, its saviors, its redeemers—aye, its suffering Messiah. You can very well understand that this brief introduction applies especially to the life of the man whom we desire to discuss

to-day, the noblest American of them all, the greatest child of this great Republic, the savior of the nation, America's suffering Messiah—Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln and Darwin.

He was born—you know the story better than I do—in the year 1809, on February 12, a day famous in the history of England's and America's greatest emancipators, for on the day on which, in Harbin county, Kentucky, was born the liberator of the slave, in England the great emancipator, Charles Darwin, was born. Both of them born on the same day, of the same month, of the same year; both of them designed to break chains, to relieve men of shackles, to cast off fetters; the one from body, the other from soul; the one in the realm of intellectuality, the other in the world of everyday human life. It is said that Abraham Lincoln was born of Quaker ancestry, that he had a very shiftless father, a very sweet mother, whom he lost early in life, but to whom he said he owed everything he afterward became. In those days to live in the Western world did not mean what it does to-day. A few pieces of wood erected upon a little piece of ground which had been cleared meant a home, one-half being given over to the cattle, the other half serving as drawing room, bedroom, parlor, dining room and kitchen for the family. In such a home in the backwoods of Kentucky was this boy brought into the world. When he had reached the age of seven the family moved to Indiana, and a little later on they removed to Illinois.

His biographers tell how he showed a great passion for knowledge, and it is well known that in his struggle to gain information he would crouch under a tree or lie

on his stomach in the log cabin before the fire trying to get a little light on any book or slip of paper that might fall into his hands. He received in all only seven months of schooling; but he did not need the private colleges or high schools controlled, as they sometimes are, by narrow-minded political or religious bigots. The heart and soul and mind of Lincoln were attuned to the voice of nature, and in her great volume he read and learned lessons that the fewest are able to discover in even the most helpful books. Of course he was one of the great exceptions in this, as in many other respects, but he is a convincing proof of the possibilities of the well-poised mind and the honest heart to which a school and a book education have been denied.

Broad Sympathy and Tender Kindness.

Early in life he displayed evidences of coming powers as a public speaker, and it is said that some of his employers complained that he would attract "the hands" away from their work to listen to him, as, standing on a barrel-head, he would deliver an address on some current question. At the age of nineteen he was employed on a river boat plying on the Mississippi river down to New Orleans. Two years later he was similarly employed, and chancing to observe a sale of colored people on the auction block his soul revolted at the sight. It was then he remarked to a companion: "If ever I get a chance to hit slavery, by the Eternal I'll hit it hard!" We expect to hear such a sentiment expressed by a man like Lincoln, for, whatever else he was, he was a man of the tenderest sympathies. Traveling on one occasion with some lawyers, his absence was suddenly noted. "Where is Lincoln?" asked one of the lawyers. "The last

I saw of him," said another, "he had two little birds in his hand and was hunting for their nest in a bunch of crab-apple trees." An hour later Lincoln overtook his companions and they laughed at him. "You may laugh, gentlemen, but I could not have slept well to-night if I had not saved those birds; their cries would have rung in my ears."

On another occasion, while riding with some friends, he turned and rode back, got down from his horse and soiled his best suit of clothes while releasing a pig which had in some way become pinned under a rail fence. When his friends rebuked him for his appearance he remarked: "I did not want to do it myself, and so I drove by, but the look in that pig's eye seemed to say, 'There goes my last chance.' It haunted me." At another time, seeing a beetle on its back struggling to regain its normal attitude, he gently turned it over "to give it another chance." Mercy and justice reigned in his heart, righteousness dominated his soul, fair play was the ruling passion of his nature.

The Game of Politics.

In 1830 the family removed to Illinois, and Lincoln soon earned popular respect because of his physical bravery and sympathetic courage as displayed during the Black Hawk War, during which he served as a captain of volunteers. He now became interested in politics, and I have no doubt but he became master of all the details of that "popular game." If he resorted to means and methods which savored of the politician rather than of the statesman it was because Lincoln, in spite of his greatness, was only a man. We must remember this in justice to his memory. He was not a perfect man; such a one has never lived. He

had human failings, as everyone has, except the critics (?). The tendency to smooth the wrinkles out of his character has already begun to manifest itself; but those who love the rugged character of the human Lincoln want every wrinkle left untouched. Cromwell bade the artist "Paint me as I am!" and those who admire and love the martyr-President could wish that the idealizing process would cease forthwith. Lincoln was essentially one of the "plain people."

He had all the failings of ordinary humanity, all the rustic inelegancies of the backwoodsman. High-minded and honest, he nevertheless knew the tricks of the politician's trade, and, from what I have read, I am led to believe that he did sometimes resort to them. He was a manly man, not an emasculated deity. He was a human being, not a god. Washington no longer belongs to the realms of humanity, for his biographers have made of him a marble statue. Some orator said that the "father of his country" had been made "a steel engraving." Let us hope that Lincoln will escape such a fate and that none will err in representing Lincoln as anything but one of the common people, a genius, a savior, a martyr, 'tis true, but an ordinary human being, nevertheless.

Defeat and Failure.

His political career began with defeat and he tried his hand at business in which he failed. He was appointed postmaster of New Salem and became a surveyor. Business was not very brisk; the mail he carried in his hat, and his stock in trade, horse, saddle and instruments, were sold for debt. Nothing could daunt his spirit. He studied law and

mastered "grammar." A little practice began to come, and owing to his reputation as "honest Abe" his fame began to spread. Three times he was re-elected to the State Legislature, in 1836, 1838, 1840. His experiences at the State Capitol were similar to those of the average assemblyman. He entered with zest into all the usual party politics and took an active part in helping to remove the capital of Illinois from Vandalia to Springfield. One incident, like the proverbial straw, showed which way the wind blew. Together with one other member of the Legislature he protested against a pro-slavery resolution and declared "the institution of slavery to be founded on both injustice and bad policy" (March, 1837).

Law and Not Mob Rule.

From the beginning of his public life Lincoln had faith in the sound common-sense and honest motives of the people, so long as they were uninfluenced by "hired liars." He felt that the American people could show that this country was not a mere experiment in governments, but that deep down in their hearts was a profound regard for the constituted authorities and a cordial love for American institutions. He realized that slavery was wrong and he never swerved from this conviction. He knew that many desired slavery to continue, but that none could ethically justify the institution. He observed how this evil was vitiating the moral judgment of many, and in one of his early public speeches before the Y. M. C. A. of Springfield, Ill., in January, 1837, he wisely cautioned his hearers, "Let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the charter of his

own and his children's liberty. Let reverence for the laws be breathed by every American mother to the lisping babe that prattles on her lap. Let it be taught in schools, in seminaries and in colleges. Let it be written in primers, spelling books and in almanacs. Let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation."

Slavery and Moral Issue.

A man who spoke thus could not long remain without powerful influence. The time was rapidly coming when the public conscience needed awakening to the enormity of the evils worked by slavery. Men needed someone of strong convictions to stir their sluggish moral concepts, and Lincoln was one of those to accomplish this end. In his every fiber he felt the wickedness of the institution of slavery. With him the matter involved a question of morals, and since he felt it was a wicked violation of fundamental rights he refused to believe that the writers of our Constitution desired to make slavery perpetual in the United States. In 1848 he had become sufficiently prominent to be elected to Congress, but his ambition found no satisfaction therefrom. At the end of his term he felt that he was not designed to be the people's representative and sought to be a Commissioner of the Land Office Department. In this he failed, but he was offered the territorial governorship of Oregon, which he did not accept. The year 1850 found him, therefore, of uncertain hopes concerning a political future, but enjoying a successful law practice in partnership with a most reputable attorney.

His Marriage.

But in the meantime he had married, his love affairs proving, however, sad in the extreme. The girl he loved died, and this same man, who could patiently serve a nation in arms in later years, was often seen lying over the grave in which lay buried Miss Ann Rutledge, weeping and sobbing as if his heart would break. In course of time he became reconciled and proposed marriage to another young woman, who rejected him. His third experience was with Miss Mary Todd, who became his wife. It is needless to refer to the strange and sad occurrences which took place before the marriage and, according to some, after it. To repeat them here and now is neither seemly nor sympathetic. Suffice it to say that in this matter, as in all others, Lincoln was guided by his conscience, and though he did not see his duty as other men might, he was, nevertheless, in all things a man of honor and integrity.

Mastered the History of Slavery.

The rest of Lincoln's life revealed to him, as to the world, that his previous failures and sorrows had been the moral instructors, the mentors, necessary to fit him to occupy the most prominent position during one of the most important periods of human history. He did not know, neither did the nation, what was lying in wait, and it was only in 1854 that the American people awoke to the meaning of the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Bill. These measures were like a prepared train, which, if ignited, would explode a vast volume of, so to speak, moral dynamite, and Lincoln was the man who, foremost among the abolitionists, laid the match to that train. He

had studied the slavery question. He was a master of every detail of its history and of the legislation concerning it. It was the one only question "on which he would become excited." It set his whole being aflame in opposition to the gigantic wrong. It was not with him a question of sectarian bias. There was no religious creed involved in this matter as far as he was concerned, although the churches, North and South, split over it. To him it was purely and simply, a matter of right and wrong,—not Christian right or wrong, nor Mahomedan right or wrong, nor Jewish right or wrong, but purely an ethical question.

More Than Sectarian Question.

It is necessary to digress for a moment at this point to emphasize this thought. Lincoln's religion could not be bound within the fences of church creeds. The essential difference between right and wrong was not, according to Lincoln, a matter disclosed by sectarian dogmas. He did not believe as the bulk of his fellow countrymen did in this respect. He understood the devious ways of creed and dogma too well to bind his intelligent and spiritual mind by any such specimens of logic, based on suppositious premises, as creeds and articles of belief and confessions of faith. His religion was too broad for the churches of his day and his heart found nourishment in better soul-food than they supplied. I desire you to follow me one step further on this question, in order that you may fully realize the meaning of the damning creeds pitilessly rehearsed by millions of people who, I verily believe, are much better than their creeds. If these creeds are true, then this Abraham Lincoln, whom this nation proclaims to have been the

embodiment of the spirit of a great people, is at this moment writhing in everlasting hell, gnashing his teeth and wailing, as his body is being boiled in hot pitch or burned and re-burned in eternal fire. For Lincoln was not a Christian, since he did not believe in Jesus as the only begotten son of God, nor in his power to save men from the consequences of their own sins. He was not a member of the Church and he did not accept the dogmas of Christianity, and, therefore, by the logic of the situation the churches are forced to consign Lincoln to eternal hell.

A Poor Sectarian.

That our great President was not an orthodox believer will be disputed by none who have read the reliable biographies that have appeared. According to Herndon, his law partner, (cf "Abraham Lincoln," by William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Vol. II., pp. 145-156), he was a rationalist, and among the many witnesses he adduces in his endeavor to disclose Lincoln's position on matters of religion is Mrs. Lincoln, who says, "Mr. Lincoln had no faith and no hope in the usual acceptation of those words. He never joined a church, but still, as I believe, he was a religious man by nature. He seemed to think much about this, particularly when our Willie died, and more than ever about the time he went to Gettysburg, but it was a kind of poetry in his nature. He was never a technical Christian."

Lincoln's Religion Not Christian.

If further testimony were needed it might be obtained from Mr. Frank B. Carpenter's "Six Months at the White House," in which he quotes the Hon. H. C. Deming of

Connecticut as remarking, "On one occasion I shall never forget, the conversation turned upon religious subjects, and Mr. Lincoln made this impressive remark: 'I have never united myself to any church because I have found difficulty in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long, complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterize their Articles of Belief and Confessions of Faith. When any church will inscribe over its altar, as its sole qualification for membership, the Savior's condensed statement of the substance of both law and Gospel, "'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself,'" that church will I join with all my heart and all my soul.'" In these words there is no scrap of consolation for those who refer to the fact that since Lincoln speaks of "the *Savior's* condensed statement," he accepted Jesus as the world's savior. Such a deduction would be as illogical as to say that Ingersoll's occasional reference to God proves that he was not an agnostic.

If I have dwelt on this matter at this point, my purpose has been twofold. In the first place I wish you to thoroughly realize the injustice of some of these sectarian creeds; and in the second place, I want to emphasize the fact that Lincoln, like the other prophets of whom I have spoken in this course of lectures, stood far above creeds and dogmas, while being, in every particular, a most intensely religious man. To him, as to us, religion had more to do with character than with belief, with deed than with creed, with righteousness than with confessions of faith. I am not blaming any man or party by these remarks. I

only blame certain creeds which, I think, are wrong, and which must either be revised or expunged if religion is not to be harmed. For when men are forced to choose between a religion whose creeds can consign a Lincoln to the eternal fires of hell and no religion at all, their choice will, as a rule, be easily made.

Lincoln and Douglas.

But to resume. The State of Illinois became, in a political sense, the forum of the slavery question. It became apparent to Lincoln, as to all the abolitionists, that the repeal of the Missouri Compromise would make the institution of slavery a perpetual, instead of a temporary, expedient. He arose in arms against this attempt to foist this unspeakable evil on the nation. The Whig party disappeared in the fusion of anti-slavery interests and the Republican party was born. Nominated for the United States Senate as a Whig, he failed to receive sufficient votes for election. The first Republican National Convention nominated him for Vice-President and he received a not inconsiderable support, but failed to be chosen. Another man would have retired after so many failures. But Lincoln had now discovered that he had a mission to fulfil. The serpent of slavery threatened to enter into the paradise of America as a perpetual guest, and he felt that it must not be scotched; it had to be destroyed. The opportunity was at hand. The celebrated Stephen A. Douglas was one of the United States Senators from Illinois. He had espoused the Democratic side of the slavery issue, and it was felt that when, during the Senate recesses, he sought to explain his position to the Illinois electors, someone ought to

be prepared to answer him. Lincoln seemed to be the logical person.

The Peoria Address.

Accordingly in October, 1854, in an address at Peoria, he took an opportunity of opposing Douglas. In course of that address he said, "I particularly object to the new position which the avowed principle of this Nebraska law gives to slavery in the body politic. I object to it because it assumes that there can be moral right in the enslaving of one man by another. * * * I object to it because the Fathers of the Republic eschewed and rejected it. * * * The plain, unmistakable spirit of their age towards slavery was hostility to the principle, and toleration only by necessity. But now it is to be transformed into a sacred right. * * * Henceforth it is to be the chief jewel of the nation,—the very figure-head of the ship of State. Little by little, but steadily as man's march to the grave, we have been giving up the old for the new faith. Near eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for some men to enslave others is a sacred right of self-government. These principles cannot stand together. They are as opposite as God and Mammon; and whoever holds to the one must despise the other."

Keen Logic and Biting Satire.

Lincoln's uncompromising attitude on this question and his keen reasoning won for him the respect and honor of his fellow-citizens throughout Illinois. With wit and satire and a penetrating and pitiless logic as his instru-

ments, with a firm conviction in the righteousness of his cause, he entered the arena assured that he must finally win. He traced the progress made by the pro-slavery advocacy in a few words, in a manner that was charmingly simple and supremely convincing. Said he, "As a nation, we began by declaring that *all men are created equal*. We now practically read it, *all men are created equal except negroes*. When the Know-nothings get control, it will read, *all men are created equal except negroes* and foreigners and Catholics. When it comes to this, I shall prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy." A man who reasoned thus, and who strengthened his reasoning by his mode of life, could not but impress his personality on the community.

Accordingly in 1858 the Illinois Republican party nominated him for United States Senator to oppose Stephen A. Douglas, whose term was just about to end. On that occasion Lincoln uttered these words which have since been regarded as a matchless piece of logic, as well as an utterance worthy of perpetual remembrance by nations. States, communities and homes. Said he, "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe that this government cannot endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved,—I do not expect the house to fall; but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief

that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South."

Douglas Debates Made Lincoln Known.

Up till this time Lincoln was a man, who, from a national standpoint, was comparatively unknown. When, after his nomination for the Senate, it was agreed that he and Douglas should hold a series of debates on the questions of the day, Lincoln at once became a national character and held a prominent position in the eyes of the country. Douglas, who was known as "the little giant," imagined he would have a simple task to overcome Lincoln; as boys would say, now-a-days, he thought "he would have an easy time with the country jay." Lincoln knew that he faced both the opportunity and the battle of his life. For Douglas was a scholar, a polished speaker, a clever debater and used to the public platform; while Lincoln's deficiencies in this respect were known to none better than to Lincoln himself. Debate after debate followed and it became apparent to him that the position of Senator was of secondary importance. It dawned on Lincoln at last that the outcome of these debates might be an election, not to the Senate, but to the White House.

The Important Query.

He accordingly proceeded to set before Douglas a series of questions the answers to which might give his opponent an immediate gain, but would bring to himself the greater, though more distant, advantage. Accordingly, at

Jonesboro, he demanded a reply to his queries, one of them being, "Can the people of a United States Territory in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State constitution?" His friends begged him not to ask this question. They all foretold his defeat and pointed out the immense popular advantage Douglas would gain from his reply. But Lincoln knew that if his opponent answered in the affirmative or the negative he would lose either the North or the South, and he likewise felt that if Douglas captured the Senate, he himself might capture the Presidency. The course of events sustained his remarkable foresight.

Nominated for President.

It followed naturally, as Lincoln thought, that when a candidate for the Presidency was required he would be the man. The Republican party wisely selected him as its nominee. His speech at Cooper Union, New York, set the country at ease as to his position. Then he showed the character of the man he was, and he stood out in bold relief over his former adversary, Douglas. For the latter had held, as Lincoln had quoted in his last debate with the Senator, that "he did not care whether slavery is voted up or down." Lincoln's position was unswerving in his sense of right, immovably fixed on the eternal granite of moral principle. "Neither let us," said he to the New York audience, "be slandered from our duty by false accusations against us, nor frightened from it by menaces of destruction to the government, nor of dungeons to ourselves. Let us have faith that right makes might, and in that faith let

us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it." The general election was favorable to Lincoln and the struggle of years, with its defeats and disappointments ended by his being called to the most honorable position in the gift of a free people. He, finally, left Springfield for Washington and, on the way East, he stopped long enough to speak here in Pittsburg.

He then proceeded to Trenton, Philadelphia, Harrisburg and lastly to Washington. In the East he learned of a conspiracy formed in Baltimore to assassinate him and with this in mind, as well as the grave public situation, he said on the steps of Independence Hall, "It was not the mere matter of the separation of the colonies from the motherland, but that sentiment in the Declaration of Independence which gave liberty, not alone to the people of this country, but hope to all the world for all future time. It was that which gave promise that in due time the weight would be lifted from the shoulders of all men, and that all should have an equal chance. This is the sentiment embodied in the Declaration of Independence. Now, my friends, can this country be saved on that basis? If it can, I will consider myself one of the happiest men in the world if I can help to save it. But if it cannot be saved from that principle, it will be truly awful. But if this country cannot be saved without giving up that principle, I was about to say that I would rather be assassinated on this spot than surrender it."

First Inaugural.

He reached Washington safely and on March 4th, 1861, delivered his famous First Inaugural Address. That speech is a part of history. It was the pathetic pleading of a father with his family not to quarrel. He yearned to have peace. He wanted the house to remain undivided. He wanted the various States to form an unbroken Union. He wanted the Union to be the expression of the will of a free and unseparated people. Never, as long as lips can issue words, never so long as human souls can flame forth in commendation of right will these words be forgotten, "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you. You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend it.' I am loathe to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

His Difficult Undertaking.

Lincoln realized that the temper of the South was such that the issue between it and the rest of the country would be settled only on the bloody field of battle. Yet he sought every means of avoiding war, and he determined that the

South should be the aggressor. The firing on Fort Sumter brought the matter to a climax, war ensued, the awful memory abiding with you to this day. For the chief figure of that awful period one cannot but feel pity as well as reverence. No man ever had a more difficult task to perform than he. Disaffection existed on all sides; in the country, in the party, in the cabinet. He had been President but one month when Seward complained, "You have already been in power one month and you have no policy, domestic or foreign." He even went so far as to lecture the President and to write him what should be his course of action abroad and at home. Had Lincoln been any other man he would have ruined Seward by publishing that letter; as it was, the writer soon learned of his mistake, and did penance by affording manly support to his chief. Chase, too, was aggrieved because a man of Lincoln's type should have been chosen over himself. Then, too, men of the tions, but Lincoln never swerved, never lost his temper, but always remained fixed in his determination "to save the Greeley type worried the President with advice and suggestions for the Union."

The Greeley Letter.

His letter to Greeley in August, 1862, shows his character remarkably and is well worth remembering. It runs thus, in part, "As to the policy I 'seem to be pursuing,' as you say, I have not meant to leave any one in doubt. I would save the Union. I would save it in the shortest way under the constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored, the nearer the Union will be,—the Union as it was. If there be those who would not save the Union

unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave, I would do it; if I could save it by freeing all the slaves, I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do less whenever I shall believe that what I am doing hurts the cause; and I shall do more whenever I shall believe doing more will help the cause. I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors, and I shall adopt new views as fast as they shall appear to be true views. I have here stated my purpose according to my view of official duty, and I intend no modification of my oft-expressed personal wish that all men everywhere could be free."

Prophet, Statesman, Martyr.

After the war had begun Lincoln became impressed with the wisdom of emancipating the negroes, as a political necessity. The defeats of the Northern army delayed the issuance of the document he had presented to the Cabinet in July, 1862. However, on September 22nd, 1862, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, and on January 1st, 1863, the negroes were freed and hundreds of thousands of men capable of bearing arms were added to the Northern

cause. Victory finally came to the anti-slavery party. Abolition triumphed, and peace was restored. Lincoln was re-elected President, but not for long did he enjoy his well-earned fame. The assassin's bullet laid him low; the statesman who had shown himself to be a prophet became a martyr for the cause he had served.

The Nation's Fadeless Memory.

They did not know, those enemies of Lincoln's, that he had been their great friend. They did not understand, those yellow journals of the sixties, that Lincoln was the great spirit of liberty embodied in a man. They did not know that this Abraham Lincoln was the noblest American of them all. It was the frenzied madness of a lunatic that laid him low. Darkness came at the bright noonday. Those who had been foes gathered around his bier and pronounced eulogies of the great prophet who, as a statesman, had seen that the house could not remain divided and that this Union could not continue half slave and half free. He broke shackles; he destroyed fetters; he brought light where it had been dark. Upon the rugged face of this world-prophet destiny carved, with patient hand, the symbol of greatness. He loved to bring the smile where before there had been tears.

America's Suffering Messiah.

He was America's suffering Messiah. Despised and rejected of men originally, he became the Prophet of the Union. Upon him was laid the burden of the people. He was oppressed for the nation; he was destroyed, the victim of the nation's passion. He began as a raw backwoodsman;

he ended a Prophet. He began an awkward stump-speaker; he ended as one of the world's orators. He began unknown; he ended standing on the pedestal of greatness, as undying as the name America itself. He began restricted in opportunity he ended with hands outstretched to bless the nation, the one hand breaking shackles, the other hand uplifting the fallen.

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world—This was a man."

In the preparation of the foregoing biographical sketches the writer has consulted, among others, the following works:

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